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SUBSTRATE STICKING METHOD AND ITS DEVICE

[Abstract]

PROBLEM TO BE SOLVED: To surely stick substrates together in a short

20 time.

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SOLUTION: Two substrates 33, 34 at least either one of which is provided with an adhesive 37 are oppositely arranged in a vacuum chamber 15, the inside of the vacuum chamber 15 is gradually exhausted and after that, made into a vacuum state by rapidly exhausting it. And the respective substrates 33, 34 are mechanically pressurized and stuck together and

gas is gradually introduced until the inside of the vacuum chamber 15 becomes prescribed pressure after the pressurization and the sticking. And when the inside of the vacuum chamber 15 reaches the prescribed pressure, the inside of the vacuum chamber is set as atmospheric pressure by rapidly introducing the gas.

[Claims]

[Claim 1]

A substrate adhesion method wherein two sheets of substrates at least one of which has an adhesive are positioned within a vacuum chamber of the vacuum state, pressurized and adhered together, wherein the substrates are disposed opposite to each other and are target adhesion subjects, the method comprising:

a first exhaust process in which each of the substrates is introduced into the vacuum chamber and slowly exhausted until the inside of the vacuum chamber obtains a predetermined pressure; and

a second exhaust process in which if the inside of the vacuum chamber obtains a predetermined pressure in the first exhaust process, the inside of the vacuum chamber is rapidly exhausted to become the vacuum state.

15 [Claim 2]

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The substrate adhesion method as claimed in claim 1, further including:

a pressurization process of mechanically pressurizing each of the substrates in the vacuum state;

a first gas introduction process in which after the pressurization process, a gas is slowly introduced until the inside of the vacuum chamber having the vacuum state obtains a predetermined pressure; and

a second gas introduction process in which if the inside when the vacuum chamber obtains the predetermined pressure in the first gas introduction process, a gas is rapidly introduced to make the inside of the

vacuum chamber to include an atmospheric pressure.

[Claim 3]

A substrate adhesion method wherein two sheets of substrates at least one of which has an adhesive are positioned within a vacuum chamber of the vacuum state, pressurized and adhered together, wherein the substrates are disposed opposite to each other and are target adhesion subjects, the method comprising:

a pressurization process of mechanically pressurizing each of the substrates in the vacuum state;

a first gas introduction process in which after the pressurization process, a gas is slowly introduced until the inside of the vacuum chamber having the vacuum state obtains a predetermined pressure; and

a second gas introduction process in which if the inside when the vacuum chamber obtains the predetermined pressure in the first gas introduction process, a gas is rapidly introduced to make the inside of the vacuum chamber to include an atmospheric pressure.

[Claim 4]

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A substrate adhesion apparatus including a vacuum chamber that pressurizes two sheets of substrates being a target adhesion subject therein and adhering the two substrates, a table that is disposed within the vacuum chamber and can move in a parallel direction to a plane of a corresponding substrate, which supports one of the two substrates, and a pressurization plate that is disposed within the vacuum chamber and can move in a perpendicular direction to a plane of a corresponding substrate,

which supports the other of the two substrates and is opposite to one of the substrates, the substrate adhesion apparatus comprising:

a gas exhaust means that evacuates the inside of the vacuum chamber and is disposed in the vacuum chamber; and

an exhaust speed varying means, disposed in the gas exhaust means, that changes the exhaust speed of a gas within the vacuum chamber and is disposed in the gas exhaust means.

[Claim 5]

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The substrate adhesion apparatus as claimed in claim 4, wherein the exhaust speed varying means includes a first exhaust mechanism that slowly exhausts the vacuum chamber until the vacuum chamber obtains a predetermined pressure, and a second exhaust mechanism that rapidly exhausts the vacuum chamber of the vacuum chamber obtains a predetermined pressure.

15 [Claim 6]

The substrate adhesion apparatus as claimed in claim 4, further comprising:

a gas introduction means that allows the inside of a corresponding vacuum chamber to obtain an atmospheric pressure and is disposed in the vacuum chamber, and

an introduction speed varying means that changes the introduction speed of the gas into the vacuum chamber and is disposed in the gas introduction means.

[Claim 7]

A substrate adhesion apparatus including a vacuum chamber that

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pressurizes two sheets of substrates being target adhesion subjects therein and adhering the two substrates, a table that is disposed within the vacuum chamber and can move in a parallel direction to a plane of a corresponding substrate, which supports one of the two substrates, and a pressurization plate that is disposed within the vacuum chamber and can move in a perpendicular direction to the plane of the corresponding substrate, which supports the other of the two substrates and is opposite to one of the substrates, the substrate adhesion apparatus comprising:

a gas introduction means that is disposed in the vacuum chamber and allows the inside of a corresponding vacuum chamber to obtain an atmospheric pressure; and

introduction speed varying means that is disposed in the gas introduction means and varies the introduction speed of a gas into the vacuum chamber.

15 [Claim 8]

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The substrate adhesion apparatus as claimed in claim 6 or 7, wherein the introduction speed varying means includes a first gas introduction mechanism that slowly exhausts the vacuum chamber until the vacuum chamber obtains a predetermined pressure, and a second gas introduction mechanism that rapidly exhausts the vacuum chamber when the vacuum chamber obtains a predetermined pressure.

[Claim 9]

The substrate adhesion apparatus as claimed in claim 6 or 7, wherein the first gas introduction mechanism includes a pipe communicating with the vacuum chamber, and a valve that closes the

pipe, and

the second gas introduction mechanism has an atmospheric open valve that opens the vacuum chamber to the atmosphere.

[Claim 10]

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The substrate adhesion apparatus as claimed in claim 9, wherein if the pressure within the vacuum chamber exceeds a predetermined pressure, force is applied to the atmospheric open valve in advance so that the atmospheric open valve can be opened.

10 [Title of the invention]

SUBSTRATE STICKING METHOD AND ITS DEVICE

[Detailed Description of the Invention]

[0001]

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[Field of the Invention]

The present invention relates to a substrate adhesion method and apparatus thereof, wherein press force is effectively applied when two substrates are adhered together.

[0002]

[Description of the Prior Art]

In manufacturing a liquid crystal display panel, two sheets of glass substrates in which a transparent electrode or a thin film transistor array is disposed are adhered together with a very close distance of several µm (for example, 2µm) using a sealant having a □ shape, which is provided at the outer edge of the substrates or an adhesive coated on a_proper location of the outer circumference of the substrate (the substrates after

adhesion is referred to as "cell"). Each of the substrates and a space formed by the sealant or the adhesive is sealed using liquid crystal.

[0003]

sealing of liquid crystal includes Japanese Unexamined Patent Application Publication No. 2000-284295 discloses a method in which liquid crystal is dropped on one of substrates in which the sealant is patterned in a close pattern (\square shape) so that an inlet is not formed. Further, the other of the substrates is disposed on one of the substrates within the vacuum chamber, a distance between the other of the substrates and one of the substrates becomes narrow in the vacuum state, and the two substrates are pressurized and adhered together.

To be more precise, in the substrate adhesion method disclosed in Japanese Unexamined Patent Application Publication No. 2000-284295, a bottom surface of a pressurization plate disposed within the vacuum chamber supports one of the substrates. In a same manner, the other of the substrates is supported on a table which is disposed within the vacuum chamber opposite to the pressurization plate. Further, the inside of the vacuum chamber is depressurized to become a vacuum state. A distance between the pressurization plate and the table becomes narrow, and the two substrates are adhered together.

[0005]

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[Means for Solving the Problem]

In the substrate adhesion method disclosed in the exemplary prior

art, however, when making the inside of the vacuum chamber in the vacuum state, each of the substrates is torn by the flow of a gas exhausted within the vacuum chamber. Further, there is a possibility that positional deviation or damage such as crack can occur in the substrate supported in the pressurization plate or the table.

[0006]

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Furthermore, since the pressure is rapidly decompressed, there is a problem in that moisture in the air within the vacuum chamber, and moisture adhered to a wall within the vacuum chamber, a film of the substrate, the liquid crystal and the like is frozen, having a bad influence on the cell. In this case, in order to avoid the bad influence on the cell, a waiting time until the frozen moisture is vaporized is needed. Thus, there is a problem in that time is taken in a substrate adhesion process.

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Furthermore, in the substrate adhesion method, the substrates are adhered together by applying pressure to each of the substrates using the pressurization plate. However, there is a problem in that the upper and lower substrates cannot be adhered together only with the pressure of the pressurization plate. For example, in the case of a small substrate, desired press force can be obtained only with the pressurization plate that gives mechanical press. If a substrate is large, press force becomes short and a sealant is not adhered in an effective way. This makes it impossible to adhere the substrates with a desired distance. Further, as such, if the sealant is not adhered in an effective way, a contact area between the substrates and the sealant becomes small, resulting in a poor contact

state. Furthermore, since liquid crystal does not diffuse into circumference of the sealant, there is a problem in that a large vacuum space is formed within the circumference.

[8000]

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Accordingly, the present invention has been made in view of the above problems, and it is an object of the present invention to provide a substrate adhesion method and apparatus thereof, wherein generation of tearing of substrates or frozen moisture can be prevented, and adhesion can be thus accomplished certainly within a short time. Another object of the present invention to provide a substrate adhesion method and apparatus thereof, wherein a distance between substrates after adhesion can be positioned exactly, whereby adhesion is accomplished certainly within a short time.

[0009]

15 [Means for Solving the Problem]

In order to accomplish a first object, in the present invention according to Claim 1, there is provided a substrate adhesion method wherein two sheets of substrates at least one of which has an adhesive are positioned within a vacuum chamber of the vacuum state, pressurized and adhered together, wherein the substrates are disposed opposite to each other and are target adhesion subjects, the method including a first exhaust process in which each of the substrates is introduced into the vacuum chamber and slowly exhausted until the inside of the vacuum chamber obtains a predetermined pressure, and a second exhaust process in which if the inside of the vacuum chamber obtains a

predetermined pressure in the first exhaust process, the inside of the vacuum chamber is rapidly exhausted to become the vacuum state.

In this case, in the present invention according to Claim 2, in order to accomplish a first object, in the substrate adhesion method according to Claim 1, the substrate adhesion method includes a pressurization process of mechanically pressurizing each of the substrates in the vacuum state, a first gas introduction process in which after the pressurization process, a gas is slowly introduced until the inside of the vacuum chamber having the vacuum state obtains a predetermined pressure, and a second gas introduction process in which if the inside when the vacuum chamber obtains the predetermined pressure in the first gas introduction process, a gas is rapidly introduced to make the inside of the vacuum chamber to include an atmospheric pressure.

15 [0011]

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[0010]

In order to accomplish the second object, in the invention according to Claim 3, a substrate adhesion method includes a pressurization process of mechanically pressurizing each of the substrates in the vacuum state, a first gas introduction process in which after the pressurization process, a gas is slowly introduced until the inside of the vacuum chamber having the vacuum state obtains a predetermined pressure, and a second gas introduction process in which if the inside when the vacuum chamber obtains the predetermined pressure in the first gas introduction process, a gas is rapidly introduced to make the inside of the vacuum chamber to include an atmospheric

pressure.

[0012]

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In order to accomplish the first object, in the invention according to Claim 4, a substrate adhesion apparatus includes a vacuum chamber that pressurizes two sheets of substrates being a target adhesion subject therein and adhering the two substrates, a table that is disposed within the vacuum chamber and can move in a parallel direction to a plane of a corresponding substrate, which supports one of the two substrates, and a pressurization plate that is disposed within the vacuum chamber and can move in a perpendicular direction to a plane of a corresponding substrate, which supports the other of the two substrates and is opposite to one of the substrates. The substrate adhesion apparatus further includes gas exhaust means that evacuates the inside of the vacuum chamber and is disposed in the vacuum chamber, and exhaust speed varying means that changes the exhaust speed of a gas within the vacuum chamber and is disposed in the gas exhaust means.

[0013]

In this case, in the invention according to Claim 5, in the substrate adhesion apparatus according to Claim 4, the exhaust speed varying means includes a first exhaust mechanism that slowly exhausts the vacuum chamber until the vacuum chamber obtains a predetermined pressure, and a second exhaust mechanism that rapidly exhausts the vacuum chamber of the vacuum chamber obtains a predetermined pressure.

25 [0014]

Furthermore, in the invention according to Claim 6, in order to accomplish the second object, in the substrate adhesion apparatus according to Claim 4 or 5, the substrate adhesion apparatus further includes gas introduction means that allows the inside of a corresponding vacuum chamber of the vacuum state to become an atmospheric pressure and is disposed in the vacuum chamber, and introduction speed varying means that changes the introduction speed of the gas into the vacuum chamber and is disposed in the gas introduction means.

[0015]

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In order to accomplish the second object, in the invention according to Claim 7, there is provided a substrate adhesion apparatus including a vacuum chamber that pressurizes two sheets of substrates being a target adhesion subject therein and adhering the two substrates, a table that is disposed within the vacuum chamber and can move in a parallel direction to a plane of a corresponding substrate, which supports one of the two substrates, and a pressurization plate that is disposed within the vacuum chamber and can move in a perpendicular direction to a plane of a corresponding substrate, which supports the other of the two substrates and is opposite to one of the substrates. The substrate adhesion apparatus further includes gas introduction means that is disposed in the vacuum chamber and allows the inside of a corresponding vacuum chamber of the vacuum state to become an atmospheric pressure, and introduction speed varying means that is disposed in the gas introduction means and varies the introduction speed of a gas into the vacuum chamber.

[0016]

In this case, in the invention according to Claim 8, in the substrate adhesion apparatus according to Claim 6 or 7, the introduction speed varying means includes a first gas introduction mechanism that slowly exhausts the vacuum chamber until the vacuum chamber obtains a predetermined pressure, and a second gas introduction mechanism that rapidly exhausts the vacuum chamber of the vacuum chamber obtains a predetermined pressure.

[0017]

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Furthermore, in the invention according to Claim 9, in the substrate adhesion apparatus according to Claim 8, the first gas introduction mechanism includes a pipe communicating with the vacuum chamber, and a valve that closes the pipe, and the second gas introduction mechanism has an atmospheric open valve that opens the vacuum chamber to the atmosphere.

[0018]

Furthermore, in the invention according to Claim 10, in the substrate adhesion apparatus according to Claim 9, if the pressure within the vacuum chamber exceeds a predetermined pressure, force is previously applied to the atmospheric open valve so that the atmospheric open valve is opened.

[0019]

[Embodiment of the Invention]

[First_Embodiment] A substrate adhesion apparatus according to the present invention will be described in connection with a first embodiment

with reference to Figs. 1 to 3.

[0020]

[Configuration of Substrate Adhesion Apparatus] As shown in Fig. 1, the substrate adhesion apparatus mainly includes a XYO stage unit S1 that positions two substrates 33 and 34 being target adhesion subjects (hereinafter, the substrate 33 laid on a table 9 to be described later is referred to as a "lower substrate 33", and the substrate 34 supported by a pressurization plate 16 to be described later is referred to as a "upper substrate 34".), a substrate adhesion unit S2 that performs an adhesion operation on the substrates 33 and 34, and a Z-axis moving stage unit S3 that performs a first pressurization operation on the substrates 33 and 34, wherein the respective units S1, S2 and S3 are sequentially disposed on the mounting plate 1. In this case, the $XY\theta$ stage unit S1 is located on the mounting plate 1. The substrate adhesion unit S2 is supported by a : first frame 2 having four support pole laid on the mounting plate 1. The Z-axis moving stage unit S3 is supported by a second frame 3 having four support poles disposed on the mounting plate 1. Hereinafter, the units S1, S2 and S3 will be described in detail.

[0021]

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20 [XYθ Stage Unit] The XYθ stage unit S1 includes a X stage 4a disposed on the mounting plate 1, a Y stage 4b disposed on the X stage 4a, and a θ stage 4c disposed on the Y stage 4b. The X stage 4a of the present embodiment is constructed to move the Y stage 4b and the θ stage 4c in the right and left direction (a X-axis direction-in Fig. 1) by means of a driving motor 5. Furthermore, the Y stage 4b is adapted to

move the θ stage 4c in the forward and backward direction (a Y-axis direction in Fig. 1) by means of a driving motor 6. Furthermore, the θ stage 4c is constructed to rotate in the θ direction shown in Fig. 1 against the Y stage 4b by means of the driving motor 8 with the rotary bearing 7 intervened therebetween.

[0022]

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In this case, the table 9 on which the lower substrate 33 is located is fixed on the θ stage 4c through the support pole 10. Further, an arm 11 that surrounds a bottom side of the support pole 10 is disposed on the Y stage 4b through the rotary bearing 13 and the vacuum seal 14. This prevents the arm 11 from rotating according to the rotation of the support pole 10. Furthermore, a vacuum bellows 12 one end of which is fixed on the arm 11 and the other end of which is fixed to the bottom of the vacuum adhesion room 15, wherein the vacuum bellows is made of a resilient material of a bellow shape surrounding the support pole 10, is disposed between the arm 11 and a vacuum adhesion room 15 of the substrate adhesion unit S2. The vacuum bellows 12 maintains the vacuum state within the vacuum adhesion room 15 upon adhesion.

[0023]

Furthermore, in the present embodiment, it has been described that only one support pole 10 is disposed almost at the center of the table 9, the present invention is not limited thereto. For example, the support pole 10 can be disposed in plural if it can be rotated as much as a predetermined value of the table 9 by the θ stage 4c (the amount of deviation of a positional matching mark to be described later).

[0024]

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[the substrate adhesion unit] The substrate adhesion unit S2 includes a vacuum adhesion room (vacuum chamber) 15 that adheres two sheets of substrates 33 and 34 under vacuum, a table 9 disposed within the vacuum adhesion room 15, and a pressurization plate 16 that is disposed an upper side of the table 9 within the vacuum adhesion room 15, as shown in Fig. 1. In this case, the lower substrate 33 in which an adhesive 37 or liquid crystal 39 to be described later is disposed is supported on the table 9. The upper substrate 34 adhered to the lower substrate 33 is supported on the pressurization plate 16.

[0025]

A first aperture 15a through the substrates 33 and 34 are go in out are disposed on the side of the vacuum adhesion room 15. Further, a gate valve 17 that closes the first aperture 15a is disposed in the vacuum adhesion room 15. In this case, the gate valve 17 is constructed to move in the up and down direction (a Z-axis direction in Fig. 1) by means of a cylinder 17A.

[0026]

Furthermore, first and second exhaust tubes 20a and 20b for evacuating the vacuum adhesion room 15 are disposed under the vacuum adhesion room 15. Each of the exhaust tubes 20a and 20b is connected to a vacuum pump through a switch valve (not shown). In this case, the first exhaust tube 20a has a smaller diameter than that of the second exhaust tube 20b. For example, in the case of an exhaust tube whose cross section is almost circular, assuming that the diameter of the first exhaust

tube 20a is 1, the diameter of the second exhaust tube 20b is about 10 to 100 times. In this case, the diameter of the first exhaust tube 20a is designed to have the speed in which when the vacuum adhesion room 15 is evacuated from the first exhaust tube 20a, tearing of the substrates 33 and 34 due to the flow of a gas and frozen moisture due to scattering or decompression of liquid crystal on the lower substrate 33 are not generated. For example, when setting the diameter, the first exhaust tube 20a is experimented in pipes having different sizes. The first exhaust tube 20a having a diameter set based on the experiment results is disposed.

10 [0027]

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Further, a plurality of elevation pins 35 for receiving the lower substrate 33 from a movable machine (not shown) or taking out a cell is put erect on the part of the table 9 within the vacuum adhesion room 15. The elevation pins 35 has one end (the bottom in Fig. 1) in which the cylinder 36 is disposed. The elevation pins 35 are constructed to move in the up and down direction within a through hole formed in the table 9 by means of the cylinder 36.

[0028]

Furthermore, a pipe 21 is disposed on the vacuum adhesion room 15 and serves to return the vacuum state within the vacuum adhesion room 15 to an atmospheric pressure. A valve 22 is disposed in the middle of the pipe 21 and serves to introduce or preclude a gas (air) within the vacuum adhesion room 15. In this case, a pressure source (e.g., a pump) (not shown) is coupled to the pipe 21. It is thus possible to control the introduction speed of the gas into the vacuum adhesion room 15.

Furthermore, the pressure source may not be disposed, if needed.
[0029]

Further, an atmospheric open valve 23 having a sheet shape, which closes the second aperture 15b formed in the vacuum adhesion room 15, and a cylinder 24 that separates the atmospheric open valve 23 from the second aperture 15b are disposed on the side of the vacuum adhesion room 15 (an opposite side to the side where the gate valve 17 is provided). As such, as the atmospheric open valve 23 separates the atmospheric open valve 23 from the second aperture 15b, the inside of the vacuum adhesion room 15 can be rapidly returned to the atmospheric pressure. In this case, in the case where the cross section of the pipe 21 is almost circular, assuming that the diameter of the pipe 21 is 1, it is preferred that the diameter of the second aperture 15b is 5 or higher.

[0030]

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Furthermore, a plurality of windows 25 for monitoring positional matching marks of the substrates 33 and 34 through a mark recognition hole (not shown), which is formed in the pressurization plate 16, is disposed on the vacuum adhesion room 15. In this case, in monitoring the positional matching marks, the recognition camera 26 shown in Fig. 1 is used. Deviation of the positional matching marks of the substrates 33 and 34 is measured using the recognition camera 26.

[0031]

Then, electrostatic adsorption electrodes (not shown) and a plurality of vacuum adsorption holes 9a, for adsorbing the lower substrate 33 by way of electrostatic or vacuum adsorption, are disposed in the table

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[0032]

In the present embodiment, the electrostatic adsorption electrodes are almost square flat panel electrodes and are inserted into two almost square concave portions, respectively, which are formed at both ends of the table 9. Further, the electrostatic adsorption electrodes have their surface (a surface side of the table 9) covered with dielectric substance. The principle surface of dielectric substance is formed to face the surface of the table 9. As such, the electrostatic adsorption electrodes disposed in the table 9 are coupled through a switch for applying a positive or negative DC power. For this reason, if a positive or negative voltage is applied to each of the electrostatic adsorption electrodes, negative or positive charges are generated in the principle surface of the dielectric substance. Further, the lower substrate 34 is adsorbed to the table 9 in an electrostatic manner due to crone power generating between the lower substrate 34 and a transparent electrode film formed in the lower substrate 34. In this case, voltages applied to the electrostatic adsorption electrodes can have the same polarity or a different polarity.

[0033]

Furthermore, in the event that the inside of the substrate adhesion room 15 is atmospheric, suction adsorption can be preferably performed using the vacuum adsorption holes 9a. This is because if electrostatic adsorption is performed, a discharge phenomenon is generated due to static electricity, damaging the lower substrate 34 or the table 9 when an air layer exists between the lower substrate 34 and the table 9. For this

reason, for example, since the circumstance is under atmosphere when the lower substrate 34 is first adhered to the table 9, it is preferred that suction adsorption is performed, and electrostatic adsorption is then performed after a decompression room is decompressed to the degree where the discharge phenomenon is not generated while the decompression room is decompressed.

[0034]

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Thereafter, each of the vacuum adsorption holes 9a is coupled to an adsorption valve (not shown) disposed outside the substrate adhesion room 15 through the pipe 18, and is also coupled to a vacuum pump (not shown) through the adsorption valve. In this case, a bypass pipe for opening the atmosphere is disposed in the middle of the pipe 18 through a valve for releasing vacuum adsorption. The adsorption state is forcedly released by opening the valve for releasing vacuum adsorption. The table 9 constructed above is fixed on the θ stage 4c through the support pole 10 as described above.

[0035]

Furthermore, in the same manner as the table 9, electrostatic adsorption electrodes and a plurality of vacuum adsorption holes 16a for adsorbing the upper substrate 34 are disposed in the pressurization plate 16. At this time, as will be described later, if the substrate adhesion room 15 is decompressed with the upper substrate 34 being adsorbed in the pressurization plate 16, there is a possibility that the upper substrate 34 may be dropped since the adsorption force becomes weal. For this reason, a substrate support ring (not shown) for receiving the upper

substrate 34 at a location right below the pressurization plate 16 is disposed within the substrate adhesion room 15. The substrate support ring can be disposed corresponding to two edge portions being a diagonal location of the upper substrate 34, and is supported by a shaft extending from the top of the substrate adhesion room 15 to the bottom thereof.

[0036]

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In particular, though not shown, a shaft is inserted into a through hole formed on the top of the substrate adhesion room 15. The shaft is constructed to rotate around its shaft center and to move up and down. In this case, the shaft is surrounded with a vacuum seal in order to prevent vacuum leakage from occurring in the inside of the substrate adhesion room 15. The rotation is performed by a rotary actuator (not shown) coupled to the end of the shaft, and the up and down movement is carried out by an elevation actuator (not shown) coupled to the end of the shaft in the same manner. As such, as the shaft is rotated and moved up and down, the substrates 33 and 34 are adhered. The substrate support ring can be removed so that a liquid crystal agent dropped on the lower substrate 33 does not interfere the diffusion of the principle surface of the substrates 33 and 34 when the liquid crystal agent diffuses.

[0037]

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Each of the vacuum adsorption holes 16a is coupled to the adsorption valve (not shown) disposed outside the substrate adhesion room 15 through the pipe 19, and is also coupled to the vacuum pump (not shown) through the adsorption valve. In this case, in the same

manner as the table 9, a bypass pipe for opening the atmosphere is disposed in the middle of the pipe 18 through the valve for releasing vacuum adsorption. Further, the adsorption state is forcedly released by opening the valve for releasing vacuum adsorption. The pressurization plate 16 constructed above is fixed to a movable base 29, which will be described later, of the Z-axis moving stage unit S3 through a plurality of support poles 27.

[0038]

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In this case, a vacuum bellows 28 made of a bellow elastic material that surrounds the support pole 27 is formed between the vacuum adhesion room 15 and the movable base 29. One end of the vacuum bellows 28 is fixed on the vacuum adhesion room 15 and the other end of the vacuum bellows 28 is fixed to the bottom of the movable base 29. Thereby, the vacuum bellows 28 maintains the vacuum state within the vacuum adhesion room 15 upon adhesion.

[0039]

[Z-axis Moving Stage Unit] The Z-axis moving stage unit S3 includes a movable base 29 that supports the pressurization plate 16, a linear guide 30 disposed at both ends of the movable base 29, a rail 3a that engages the linear guide 30 and extends in the up and down direction (a Z-axis direction in Fig. 2) disposed in the frame 3, an electric motor 32 having an output axis of a Z-axis direction, and a ball screw 31 that has one end engaged with the movable base 29 and the other end engaged with the output axis of the electric motor 32. As such, since the Z-axis moving stage unit S3 is constructed, the driven electric motor 32 moves the

movable base 29 in the up and down direction along the rail, moving the pressurization plate 16 up and down.

[0040]

[Operation of Substrate Adhesion Apparatus] The operation of the substrate adhesion apparatus according to the present embodiment will be below described. In this case, a case where a substrate for a liquid crystal panel is used as a substrate being a target adhesion subject will be described as an example.

[0041]

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First, in order to seal liquid crystal within a defined frame when two substrate are adhered together, an adhesive of a circumference shape is coated so that it is not disconnected. A small amount of liquid crystal is then dropped on one of the two substrate. The substrate on which the liquid crystal is dropped will be referred to as a lower substrate 33.

[0042]

The outer circumference of the upper substrate 34 toward the bottom of a film is adsorbed using the hand of a moving machine (not shown) disposed outside the vacuum adhesion room 15. Further, the gate valve 17 disposed in the first aperture 15a of the vacuum adhesion room 15 is opened and the hand of the moving machine is inserted from the vacuum adhesion room 15 into the first aperture 15a. The electric motor 32 is driven to lower the pressurization plate 16, which is then pressed against the upper substrate 34. Thereafter, suction adsorption of the hand is released, and the vacuum pump operates to adhere the upper substrate 34 to the pressurization plate 16 through the suction adsorption hole 16a.

If the adsorption of the upper substrate 34 is completed, the hand is removed out of the vacuum adhesion room 15.

[0043]

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Then, the cylinder 36 is driven to raise each of the elevation pins 35 up so that the front end of each of the elevation pins 35 is projected from the surface of the table 9. Further, the outer circumference of the lower substrate 33 on which a plane where the liquid crystal is dropped is a top surface is adsorbed from the bottom of the hand of the moving machine. The hand is inserted into the vacuum adhesion room 15 to move the lower substrate 33 on each of the elevation pins 35. If the movement of the lower substrate 33 is finished, the hand is removed out of the vacuum adhesion room 15 and the gate valve 17 is closed. Thereafter, each of the elevation pins 35 is lowered to locate the lower substrate 33 on the table 9. The vacuum pump is driven to vacuum-adsorb the lower substrate 33 to the table 9 through the suction adsorption hole 9a.

[0044]

If the adsorption of the substrates 33 and 34 to the table 9 and the pressurization plate 16 is thus completed, the valve on the part of the first exhaust tube 20a is opened to slowly discharge a gas within the vacuum adhesion room 15. To be more precise, in the present embodiment, in an initial state of the apparatus, the first and the second exhaust tubes 20a and 20b are all closed by means of the switch valve. If the adsorption of the substrates 33 and 34 is completed, the switch valve is switched so that the first exhaust tube 20a is opened and the second exhaust tube 20b is closed, slowly exhausting the gas within the vacuum adhesion room 15.

In this case, since the gas is slowly exhausted using the first exhaust tube 20a having the above diameter, it is possible to prevent tearing of the substrates 33 and 34 due to the flow of a gas, frozen moisture due to scattering or decompression of liquid crystal on the lower substrate 33.

[0045]

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Thereafter, when the inside of the vacuum adhesion room 15 obtains a predetermined pressure due to the exhaust by the first exhaust tube 20a, more particularly, atmospheric pressure within the vacuum adhesion room 15, which is measured using a pressure gauge (not shown) becomes a pressure that does not tearing of the substrate and generation of scattering or frozen moisture of liquid crystal although the exhaust speed is increased (for example, the upper substrate 34 adsorbed by vacuum adsorption force is decompressed to the pressure of the degree which does not fall from the pressurization plate 16), the valve of the first exhaust tube 20a is shut.

[0046]

Further, the valve of the second exhaust tube 20b is opened to rapidly decompress the inside of the vacuum adhesion room 15 until the pressure for adhering the substrates 33 and 34 (in the present embodiment, about 5×10⁻³Torr). In this case, since atmospheric pressure within the vacuum adhesion room 15 becomes lower than the vacuum adsorption force of the upper substrate 33 under the pressure, the upper substrate 33 is fallen off from the pressurization plate 16. However, the aforementioned substrate support ring is provided at the bottom of the pressurization plate 16. The upper substrate 33 is supported by the

aforementioned rotary actuator or the elevation actuator through movement of the substrate support ring. Thus, the upper substrate 33 is not fallen off from the pressurization plate 16.

[0047]

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If the decompression within the above-described vacuum adhesion room 15 is completed, the substrates 33 and 34 are electrostatic-adsorbed by applying a voltage to the table 9 and the electrostatic adsorption electrode of the pressurization plate 16 so that the substrates 33 and 34 can be adsorbed to the table 9 and the pressurization plate 16, respectively, under vacuum. Thereafter, the electric motor 32 is driven to lower the movable base 29, and to make the upper substrate 34 approach the lower substrate 33. Further, positional deviation between the substrates 33 and 34 is measured by monitoring the positional matching marks provided in the substrates 33 and 34 using the recognition camera 26. The operation of each of the X stage 4a, the Y stage 4b and the θ stage 4c is controlled based on the measurement, and the table 9 is moved in a parallel way, thus exactly positioning the lower substrate 33 and the upper substrate 34.

[0048]

If such positioning is completed, the movable base 29 is further lowered, and first pressurization is then performed in which the upper substrate 34 presses the adhesive. After the first pressurization, the application of the voltage to the electrostatic adsorption electrode of the pressurization plate 16 is stopped, and the electric motor 32 is driven to raise the pressurization plate 16 up.

[0049]

In this case, the state of each of the substrates 33 and 34 after the first pressurization is shown in Fig. 2. In this case, a distance between the substrates 33 and 34 is about 15, but is not a desired distance. Due to this, the amount of compression in the adhesive 37 is low, and a contact area between the substrates 33 and 34 in the adhesive 37 is small (since the length of the contact portion 38 is short), a contact state becomes incomplete. In addition, since the liquid crystal 39 does not disperse within the edge of the adhesive 37, a great vacuum space unit 40 is formed between the liquid crystals 39.

[0050]

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The state of each of the substrates 33 and 34 corresponds to a case where the pressure of the pressurization plate 16 in the aforementioned conventional example is short. In this case, in order to apply a desired pressure, a high pressure can be applied to the apparatus itself. Since the apparatus becomes bulky, however, the cost increases since the entire apparatus must be reconstructed.

[0051]

In this case, the pressure within the vacuum adhesion room 15 varies from the vacuum state to the atmospheric pressure, the space portion (the aforementioned vacuum space unit 40) between the substrates 33 and 34 is in a vacuum state, and a high pressure is uniformly applied to each of the substrates 33 and 34 from the outside. For example, if the size of each of the substrates 33 and 34 is 1200 mm× 1000 mm, the space portion between the substrates 33 and 34 is applied

with force of 121.6 kN when being applied with the atmospheric pressure in the vacuum state. For this reason, in the present embodiment, the distance between the substrates is made to 5 μ m, preferably below 4 μ m by performing secondary pressurization while the size of the apparatus is the same as those of the prior art.

[0052]

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As mentioned above, if the pressure within the vacuum adhesion room 15 is changed from the vacuum state to the atmospheric pressure after first pressurization is completed, the pressure can be almost uniformly applied to the substrates 33 and 34. If the pressure within the vacuum adhesion room 15 is abruptly changed from the vacuum state to the atmospheric pressure, the adhesive 37 is not sufficiently pressurized as described above. Thus, the gas tears the adhesive 37 and enters the vacuum space unit 40, resulting in a defective liquid crystal substrate. For this reason, in the present embodiment, the valve 22 of the pipe 21 is opened after the first pressurization, and the gas pressurized from the pressure source coupled to the pipe 21 is introduced into the vacuum adhesion room 15, so that the pressure slowly changes to the atmospheric pressure. If the inside of the vacuum adhesion room 15 slowly returns to the atmospheric pressure, the pressure is slowly applied to the substrates 33 and 34, which are then slowly compressed by the adhesive 37. Thus, the contact area between the adhesive 37 and each of the substrates 33 and 34 slowly expands. By doing so, since a difference between the internal pressure of the vacuum space unit- 30 and the pressure within the vacuum adhesion room 15 becomes high slowly, there

is no possibility that the introduced gas tears the adhesive 37 and enters the vacuum space unit 40.

[0053]

Each of the substrates 33 and 34 in this state is shown in Fig. 3. The distance between the substrates 33 and 34 shown in Fig. 3 is about 10 µm. In this case, the adhesive 37 is compressed into a shape close to that from Fig. 2 to Fig. 3 if the gas is introduced into the vacuum adhesion room 15, as described above. The viscosity of the adhesive is lowered due to thixotropy property. In the present embodiment, in a state where the viscosity of the adhesive 37 is lowered, the atmospheric open valve 23 for returning the inside of the vacuum adhesion room 15 to the atmospheric pressure is opened to apply the pressure to each of the substrates 33 and 34. In particular, when a pressure gauge provided in the vacuum adhesion room 15 detects that the pressure exceeds a predetermined pressure, the valve 22 is shut and the cylinder 24 operates to open the atmospheric open valve 23. Thus, the pressure is added to the substrates 33 and 34, thus completing adhesion. For example, the predetermined pressure can be a pressure that allows the introduced gas not to tear the adhesive 37 and not enter the vacuum space unit 40.

20 [0054]

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As such, since the inside of the vacuum adhesion room 15 rapidly returns to the atmospheric pressure, the contact area of the adhesive 37 becomes wider against each of the substrates 33 and 34, and the sealing property is improved accordingly. Thus, there is no possibility that a gas between the substrates 33 and 34 may tear the adhesive 37. Furthermore,

the adhesive 37 is rapidly compressed since the viscosity thereof is low, and the liquid crystal 39 is pressurized and compressed and then spread.

Accordingly, an adhesion time of each of the substrates 33 and 34 becomes short.

5 [0055]

As described above, if the adhesion is completed and the pressure within the vacuum adhesion room 15 becomes the atmospheric pressure, the gate valve 17 is opened. Further, the application of the voltage to the electrostatic adsorption electrode of the table 9 is stopped. After suction in the vacuum adsorption holes 9a is released, each of the elevation pins 35 is raised to push up the cell from the table 9. Thereafter, the hand of the moving machine is inserted from the first aperture 15a into the bottom of the cell (between the cell and the table 9). The cell is moved on the hand and is then taken out of the vacuum adhesion room 15.

15 [0056]

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In this case, the cylinder 24 that moves the aforementioned atmospheric open valve 23 is set to open the atmospheric open valve 23 even when the pressure within the vacuum adhesion room 15 is in the atmospheric pressure. Thereby, although a user forgets closing the valve 22 in the aforementioned predetermined pressure, the atmospheric open valve 23 is automatically opened when the pressure within the vacuum adhesion room 15 becomes the atmospheric pressure. Therefore, the pressure within the vacuum adhesion room 15 can be controlled not to exceed the atmospheric pressure. Further, due to this, the accuracy of the cell is not degraded and the stability of the work can be secured.

[0057]

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Furthermore, in the present embodiment, it has been described that the first and second exhaust tubes 20a and 20b having different diameters are switched by the switch valve in order to change the exhaust path, and the exhaust speed is thus controlled. The present invention is, however, not limited thereto. For example, only one exhaust tube can be formed without forming the two exhaust tubes 20a and 20b as in the present embodiment. The exhaust tube can be connected to the vacuum pump and the exhaust speed can be then controlled using the vacuum pump. In this case, the exhaust tube has a thick diameter (i.e., the diameter the second exhaust tube 20b of the present embodiment).

Thereafter, a modification example of the aforementioned secondary pressurization will be described. In this case, unlike the secondary pressurization, force of a direction that opens the atmospheric open valve 23 is previously applied to the cylinder 24. The force refers to small force of the degree in which the atmospheric open valve 23 continues to close the second aperture 15b (continues to maintain the vacuum state within the vacuum adhesion room 15) when the inside of the vacuum adhesion room 15 becomes a vacuum state. In particular, the force of a direction, which is previously applied to the cylinder 24 and opens the atmospheric open valve 23, is set lower than tension force that is applied from the vacuum adhesion room 15 of the vacuum state to the atmospheric open valve 23.

25 [0059]

In this state, the valve 22 is opened and the pressure source coupled to the pipe 21 is then driven to slowly introduce a gas into the vacuum adhesion room 15. If the gas continues to be introduced, the vacuum degree within the vacuum adhesion room 15 becomes low, and the tension force becomes smaller than the force that is previously applied to the aforementioned cylinder 24 and will open the atmospheric open valve 23, the atmospheric open valve 23 is automatically closed and the pressure within the vacuum adhesion room 15 rapidly returns to the atmospheric pressure. As such, as force is previously applied to the atmospheric open valve 23, the inside of the vacuum adhesion room 15 does not exceed the atmospheric pressure. It is thus possible to secure the stability without causing the accuracy of a cell to degrade. That is, the atmospheric open valve 23 can serve as a safety valve. Further, even in the present embodiment, the pressure source is not necessarily provided.

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Hereinafter, another modification example of the secondary pressurization will be described. In the present modification example, force of a direction that closes the atmospheric open valve 23 is previously applied to the cylinder 24, unlike the modification example. The force refers to one that maintains the close state of the atmospheric open valve 23 until the pressure acts when the pressure within the vacuum adhesion room 15 becomes higher than the atmospheric pressure. In this case, the force applied to the cylinder 24 is decided according to the size of each of the substrates 33 and 34. The greater the force necessary for adhering the substrates 33 and 34, the greater the force.

[0061]

As described above, the valve 22 is opened with force previously being applied to the cylinder 2, and a pressure source coupled to the pipe 21 is driven to slowly introduce a gas into the vacuum adhesion room 15. The gas is introduced until the pressure within the vacuum adhesion room 15 exceeds the atmospheric pressure, in particular, when the pressure exceeds force previously set in the cylinder 24. If the pressure exceeds force previously set in the cylinder 24, the atmospheric open valve 23 is opened to return the pressure within the vacuum adhesion room 15 to the atmospheric pressure. As such, force of a direction that closes the atmospheric open valve 23 is previously applied to the cylinder 24. Thus, even when high pressure is needed in adhesion of the substrates 33 and 34 since the substrates 33 and 34 is great, force necessary for adhering the substrates 33 and 34 can be uniformly applied by controlling the force set in the cylinder 24.

In each of the modification examples, adhesion is finished through the pressure, as described above. If the pressure within the vacuum adhesion room 15 becomes the atmospheric pressure, the valve 22 is closed and the gate valve 17 is opened. Further, after suction in the vacuum adsorption holes 9a is released by shutting a voltage applied to an electrostatic adsorption electrode of the table 9, each of the elevation pins 35 is raised to push a cell over the table 9. Thereafter, the hand of the moving machine is inserted between the first aperture 15a and the bottom of the cell (between the cell and the table 9). The cell is then moved on the

hand to discharge the vacuum adhesion room 15 to the outside.
[0063]

[Second Embodiment] Hereinafter, a substrate adhesion apparatus according to the present invention will be described in connection with a second embodiment with reference to Fig. 4.

[0064]

[0065]

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The substrate adhesion apparatus is the same as that of the first embodiment except for the following points. More particularly, in the first embodiment, the gate valve 17 and the atmospheric open valve 23 are provided separately. In the present embodiment, however, the atmospheric open valve 23 is also used the gate valve 17. The construction thereof will be described in detail.

The construction of the gate valve 17 and atmospheric open valve 23 according to the present embodiment, which are provided for a combined use, includes a gate valve 41 that closes the first aperture 15a of the vacuum adhesion room 15, and can move in the up and down direction, a plurality of shafts 42 disposed on an opposite side to a closed surface of the gate valve 41, a cylinder 44 that is disposed on each of the shafts 42 and can move the gate valve 41 in a direction that is separated from the first aperture 15a (a X direction in Fig. 4), an arm 45 which has a L-shaped cross section shape and has a linear guide 43 that slides the shaft 42 disposed to surround each of the shafts 42 in an axis direction, and a cylinder 46 that moves the gate valve 41 fixed to the arm 45 in the up and down direction. In this case, the second aperture 15b shown in the

vacuum adhesion room 15 of the first embodiment is not formed in the vacuum adhesion room 15 of the present embodiment.

[0066]

The adhesion operation of each of the substrates 33 and 34 in the apparatus constructed above according to the present embodiment is the same as those of the first embodiment except for the operations related to the gate valve 17 and the atmospheric open valve 23 in the aforementioned first embodiment. In this case, only different points in the operation of the present embodiment will be described.

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First, in the case where each of the substrates 33 and 34 is introduced into the vacuum adhesion room 15 or a case where a cell is taken out from the vacuum adhesion room 15, the cylinder 46 is drive to move the gate valve 41 up and down together with the cylinder 44 or the arm 45. In the event that the pressure within the vacuum adhesion room 15 is rapidly returned to the atmospheric pressure upon secondary pressurization, the cylinder 44 is driven to separate the gate valve 41 from the vacuum adhesion room 15. The first aperture 15a is also opened to introduce the atmosphere into the vacuum adhesion room 15. In this case, force can be previously applied to the cylinder 44 as in the modification example of the aforementioned first embodiment, and the gate valve 41 can be operated in the same manner as the modification example.

As such, the function of the atmospheric open valve 23 according to the aforementioned first embodiment has the gate valve 41, thus

reducing the number of components. Furthermore, an apparatus can be miniaturized and can be easily assembled.

[0069]

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[Effect of the Invention]

According to a substrate adhesion method and apparatus thereof in accordance with the present invention, two sheets of substrates are introduced into a vacuum chamber, and the vacuum chamber is then slowly exhausted until the inside of the vacuum chamber obtains a predetermined pressure. Further, when the pressure becomes the predetermined pressure, the vacuum chamber is rapidly exhausted to become a vacuum state. It is thus possible to prevent tearing of substrates or frozen moisture. Accordingly, adhesion can be completed surely within a short time.

[0070]

Furthermore, substrates are mechanically pressurized and adhered. A gas is slowly introduced until the inside of a vacuum chamber of a vacuum state obtains a predetermined pressure. Further, when the pressure becomes the predetermined pressure, the gas is rapidly introduced to make the inside of the vacuum chamber in an atmospheric pressure. It is thus possible to exactly position a distance between the adhered substrates, and to complete adhesion within a short time in a sure way. Accordingly, an excellent substrate adhesion method and apparatus thereof unlike the prior art can be obtained.

- Fig. 1 is a partial cross-sectional view illustrating the construction of a substrate adhesion apparatus according to a first embodiment of the present invention.
- Fig. 2 is an explanatory view showing each of substrates after first pressurization in the present embodiment.
 - Fig. 3 is an explanatory view showing each of substrates before release of the atmosphere upon secondary pressurization in the present embodiment.
- Fig. 4 is a partial cross-sectional view illustrating the construction of a substrate adhesion apparatus according to a second embodiment of the present invention.

[Description of Numerals]

- 9: Table
- 15 15: Vacuum adhesion room (vacuum chamber)
 - 16: Pressurization plate
 - 20a: First exhaust tube (second exhaust mechanism of exhaust speed varying means)
- 20b: Second exhaust tube (first exhaust mechanism of exhaust speed varying means)
 - 21: Pipe (first gas introduction mechanism of introduction speed varying means)
 - 22: Valve (first gas introduction mechanism of introduction speed varying means)
- 25 23: Atmospheric open valve (second gas introduction mechanism of

introduction speed varying means)

33,34: Substrate

37: Adhesive

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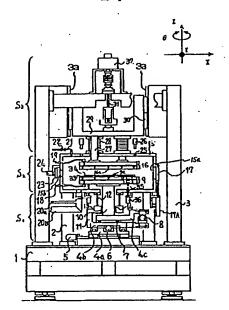
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最終頁に続く

(54) 【発明の名称】 基板貼り合わせ方法及びその装置

(57)【要約】

【課題】 確実且つ短時間で基板を貼り合せること 【解決手段】 少なくとも何れか一方に接着剤37を設けた二枚の基板33,34を真空チャンバ15内に対向して配設し、その真空チャンバ15内を所定の圧になるまで徐々に排気した後、急速に排気して真空状態にする。そして、各基板33,34を機械的に加圧貼り合わせし、この加圧貼り合わせの後、真空状態の真空チャンバ15内が所定の圧になるまで徐々にガスを導入する。そして、真空チャンバ15内がその所定圧になると急速にガスを導入して真空チャンバ15内を大気圧にすること。 1231



【特許請求の範囲】

前記真空チャンバ内に前記各基板を搬入した後、前記真 空チャンバ内が所定の圧になるまで徐々に排気する第一 排気工程と

この第一排気工程にて前記所定圧になると急速に排気し て前記真空チャンバ内を真空状態にする第二排気工程 レ

を有することを特徴とした基板貼り合わせ方法。

【 請求項2 】 前記各基板を真空状態で機械的に加圧貼り合わせする加圧工程と、

この加圧工程の後、前記真空状態の真空チャンバ内が所 定の圧になるまで徐々にガスを導入する第一ガス導入工 程と、

この第一ガス導入工程にて前記所定圧になると急速にガスを導入して前記真空チャンバ内を大気圧にする第二ガス導入工程と、

を有することを特徴とした請求項1に記載の基板貼り合 わせ方法。

【前求項3】 少なくとも何れか一方に接着剤を設け且つ対向して配設した貼り合わせ対象物たる二枚の基板を、真空状態の真空チャンバ内で位置合わせを行った後、加圧して貼り合わせを行う基板貼り合わせ方法であって、

前記各基板を英空状態で機械的に加圧貼り合わせする加

この加圧工程の後、前記真空状態の真空チャンバ内が所 定の圧になるまで徐々にガスを導入する第一ガス導入工 程と

この第一ガス導入工程にて前記所定圧になると急速にガスを導入して前記真空チャンパ内を大気圧にする第二ガス導入工程と、

を有することを特徴とした基板貼り合わせ方法。

前記真空チャンバに、その内部を真空にする為のガス排 気手段を備え、

このガス排気手段に、前記真空チャンバ内のガスの排気 速度を変更する排気速度可変手段を設けることを特徴と した基板貼り合わせ装置。 【請求項5】 前記排気速度可変手段は、前記真空チャンパ内が所定の圧になるまで徐々に排気を行う第一排気機構と、前記所定圧になると急速に排気を行う第二排気機構とを有することを特徴とした請求項4に記載の基板貼り合わせ装置。

【請求項6】 前記真空チャンバに、真空状態の当該真空チャンバ内を大気圧にする為のガス導入手段を備え、このガス導入手段に、前記真空チャンバ内へのガスの導入速度を変更する導入速度可変手段を設けることを特徴とした請求項4又は5に記載の基板貼り合わせ装置。

【請求項7】 貼り合わせ対象物たる二枚の基板を内部で加圧して貼り合わせを行う真空チャンパと、該真空チャンパ内に配設し且つ前記各基板の内の一方の基板を保持する当該基板の面に対して水平方向に移動自在なテーブルと、前記真空チャンパ内に配設し且つ前記一方の基板に対向させて前記各基板の内の他方の基板を保持する当該基板の面に対して垂直方向に移動自在な加圧板とを有する基板貼り合わせ装置であって、

前記真空チャンバに、真空状態の当該真空チャンバ内を 大気圧にする為のガス導入手段を備え、

このガス導入手段に、前記真空チャンバ内へのガスの導入速度を変更する導入速度可変手段を設けることを特徴 とした基板貼り合わせ装置。

【請求項8】 前記導入速度可変手段は、前記真空チャンバ内が所定の圧になるまで徐々にガスを導入する第一ガス導入機構と、前記所定圧になると急速にガスを導入する第二ガス導入機構とを有することを特徴とした請求項6又は7に記載の基板貼り合わせ装置。

【請求項9】 前記第一ガス導入機構は、前記真空チャンパ内に連通する配管と、該配管内を閉塞自在な弁とを有し、

前記第二ガス導入機構は、前記真空チャンバ内を大気開放する大気開放弁を有することを特徴とした請求項8に記載の基板貼り合わせ装置。

【請求項10】 前記真空チャンバ内の圧が所定の圧を超えると前記大気開放弁が開放するように、該大気開放弁に予め力を掛けておくことを特徴とした請求項9に記載の基板貼り合わせ装置。

【発明の詳細な説明】

[0001]

【発明の属する技術分野】本発明は、二つの基板を貼り合わせる際に加圧力を有効に掛けることができる基板貼り合わせ方法及びその装置に関する。

[0002]

【従来の技術】液晶表示パネルの製造には、透明電極や 薄膜トランジスタアレイが設けられた二枚のガラス基板 を、基板の周縁部に口字状に設けたシール剤や基板の外 周部の適宜な位置に塗布した接着剤で数μm(例えば2 μm)程度の極めて接近した間隔をもって貼り合わせ (以下、その貼り合わせ後の基板を「セル」とい う。)、その各基板とシール材若しくは接着剤で形成される空間に液晶を対止するという工程がある。

【0003】従来、その液晶の封止を行う際の基板貼り合わせ方法としては、注入口を設けないようにシール剤をクローズしたパターン(口字形)に描画した一方の基板上に液晶を流下しておく。そして、真空チャンバ内にて他方の基板を一方の基板の上方に配置し、真空状態でその他方の基板と一方の基板との間隔を狭めて加圧して上下の基板を貼り合わせる、という特開2000-284295号公報に開示された方法がある。

【0004】具体的にこの特開2000-284295 号公報に開示された基板貼り合わせ方法は、真空チャン バ内に配設された加圧板の下面に上記一方の基板を保持 し、且つ同じく真空チャンバ内にその加圧板と対向して 配設されたテーブル上に上記他方の基板を保持する。そ して、真空チャンバ内を減圧して真空状態にし、加圧板 とテーブルとの間隔を狭めることによって、各基板を加 圧して貼り合わせる、というものである。

[0005]

【発明が解決しようとする課題】しかしながら、上記従来例に開示された基板貼り合わせ方法にあっては、真空チャンバ内を真空状態にする際に、その真空チャンバ内から排気されるガスの流れによって各基板に暴れが発生し、加圧板やテーブルに保持された各基板の位置ずれや割れ等の破損が生じる成がある、という不都合があった。

【0006】また、急激に減圧される為、真空チャンバ内の大気中の水分が、更には真空チャンバ内の壁面、基板膜面や液晶等に付着した水分が凍結してしまい、そのままではセルに悪影響を与える虞がある、という不都合があった。ここで、そのセルへの悪影響を回避する為には、例えば凍結した水分が気化されるまで待つ等の停滞時間を要し、基板貼り合わせ工程に時間がかかってしまう、という不都合があった。

【0007】更に、その基板貼り合わせ方法にあっては加圧板で各基板に圧力を加えて貼り合わせを行っているが、その加圧板の押圧力だけでは上下の基板を所望の間隔に貼り合わせることができない場合がある、という不都合があった。例えば小さな基板の場合は機械的に加圧する加圧板のみで所望の加圧力を得ることができるが、基板が大きくなると加圧力が不足してしまい、シール剤が有効に押し潰されないので、所望の間隔で各基板を貼り合わせることができない。そして、このようにシール剤が有効に押し潰されないと、各基板とシール剤との接触面積が小さくなり接着状態が不完全なものとなってしまう、更には液晶がシール剤の枠内に広がらないのでその枠内に大きな真空空間部ができてしまう、という不都合があった。

【0008】本発明は、かかる従来例の有する不都合を 改替し、第一に各基板の暴れや水分の凍結の発生を防止 することができ、これにより確実且つ短時間で貼り合せを完了させることができる。第二に貼り合わせ後の各基板の間隔を正確に位置合わせすることができ、これにより確実且つ短時間で貼り合せを完了させることができる 基板貼り合わせ方法及びその装置を提供することを、その目的とする。

[0009]

【課題を解決するための手段】上記第一の目的を達成する為、請求項1記載の発明では、少なくとも何れか一方に接着剤を設け且つ対向して配設した貼り合わせ対象物たる二枚の基板を、真空状態の真空チャンバ内で位置合わせを行った後、加圧して貼り合わせを行う基板貼り合わせ方法において、真空チャンバ内に各基板を搬入した後、その真空チャンバ内が所定の圧になるまで徐々に排気する第一排気工程と、この第一排気工程にて所定圧になると急速に排気して真空チャンバ内を真空状態にする第二排気工程とを有している。

【0010】ここで、請求項2記載の発明では、上記第二の目的を達成する為、前述した請求項1記載の基板貼り合わせ方法において、各基板を真空状態で機械的に加圧貼り合わせする加圧工程と、この加圧工程の後、真空状態の真空チャンバ内が所定の圧になるまで徐々にガスを導入する第一ガス導入工程と、この第一ガス導入工程にてその所定圧になると急速にガスを導入して真空チャンバ内を大気圧にする第二ガス導入工程とを有している。

【0011】上記第二の目的を達成する為、請求項3記載の発明では、少なくとも何れか一方に接着剤を設け且つ対向して配設した貼り合わせ対象物たる二枚の基板を、真空状態の真空チャンバ内で位置合わせを行った後、加圧して貼り合わせを行う基板貼り合わせ方法において、各基板を真空状態で機械的に加圧貼り合わせする加圧工程と、この加圧工程の後、真空状態の真空チャンバ内が所定の圧になるまで徐々にガスを導入する第一ガス導入工程と、この第一ガス導入工程にてその所定圧になると急速にガスを導入して真空チャンバ内を大気圧にする第二ガス導入工程とを有している。

【0012】上記第一の目的を達成する為、請求項4記載の発明では、貼り合わせ対象物たる二枚の基板を内部で加圧して貼り合わせを行う真空チャンバと、この真空チャンバ内に配設し且つ各基板の内の一方の基板を保持する当該基板の面に対して水平方向に移動自在なテーブルと、真空チャンバ内に配設し且つ一方の基板に対向させて各基板の内の他方の基板を保持する当該基板の面に対して垂直方向に移動自在な加圧板とを有する基板貼り合わせ装置において、真空チャンバにその内部を真空にする為のガス排気手段を備え、このガス排気手段に真空チャンバ内のガスの排気速度を変更する排気速度可変手段を設けている。

【0013】ここで、請求項5記載の発明では、前述し

た前求項4記載の基板貼り合わせ装置において、排気速度可変手段が、真空チャンバ内が所定の圧になるまで徐々に排気を行う第一排気機構と、その所定圧になると急速に排気を行う第二排気機構とを有している。

【0014】また、請求項6記載の発明では、上記第二の目的を達成する為、前述した請求項4又は5記載の基板貼り合わせ装置において、真空チャンバに真空状態の当該真空チャンバ内を大気圧にする為のガス導入手段を備え、このガス導入手段に真空チャンバ内へのガスの導入速度を変更する導入速度可変手段を設けている。

【0015】上記第二の目的を達成する為、請求項7記載の発明では、貼り合わせ対象物たる二枚の基板を内部で加圧して貼り合わせを行う真空チャンバと、この真空チャンバ内に配設し且つ各基板の内の一方の基板を保持する当該基板の面に対して水平方向に移動自在なテーブルと、真空チャンバ内に配設し且つ一方の基板に対向させて各基板の内の他方の基板を保持する当該基板の面に対して垂直方向に移動自在な加圧板とを有する基板貼り合わせ装置において、真空チャンバに真空状態の当該真空チャンバ内を大気圧にする為のガス導入手段を備え、このガス導入手段に真空チャンバ内へのガスの導入速度を変更する導入速度可変手段を設けている。

【0017】また、 請求項9記載の発明では、 前述した 請求項8記載の基板貼り合わせ装置において、 第一ガス 導入機構は、 真空チャンバ内に連通する配管と、 この配 管内を閉塞自在な弁とを有している。 そして、 第二ガス 導入機構は、 真空チャンバ内を大気開放する大気開放弁 を有している。

【0018】更に又、請求項10記載の発明では、前述した請求項9記載の基板貼り合わせ装置において、真空チャンバ内の圧が所定の圧を超えると大気開放弁が開放するように、この大気開放弁に予め力を掛けている。

[0019]

【発明の実施の形態】[第一実施形態]本発明に係る基板貼り合わせ装置の第一実施形態について図1からに図3基づいて説明する。

【0020】 [基板貼り合わせ装置の構成] この基板貼り合わせ装置は、図1に示すように大きく分類すれば、貼り合わせ対象物たる二つの基板33,34(以下、後述するテーブル9に載置保持する基板33を「下基板33」と、後述する加圧板16に保持する基板34を「上基板34」という。)の位置決めを行うXYのステージ部S1と、各基板33,34の貼り合わせ動作を行う基板貼り合わせ部S2と、後述する各基板33,34の一

次加圧を行う2軸移動ステージ部S3とから構成されており、その各部S1、S2、S3が架台1上に順次配置されている。ここで、XYӨステージ部S1は架台1上に載置保持され、基板貼り合わせ部S2は架台1上に立設された例えば四つの支柱を備えた第一フレーム2に支持され、乙軸移動ステージ部S3は架台1上に立設された例えば四つの支柱を備えた第二フレーム3に支持される。以下、これら各部S1、S2、S3について詳述する。

【0021】 [XYのステージ部] XYのステージ部S 1は、架台1上に配設されたXステージ4aと、このX ステージ4a上に配設されたYステージ4bと、このY ステージ4b上に配設されたのステージ4cとを有する。本実施形態のXステージ4aは、駆動モータ5によってYステージ4bとのステージ4cを左右方向(図1中のX軸方向)に移動できるよう構成される。また、Y ステージ4bは、駆動モータ6によってのステージ4cを前後方向(図1中のY軸方向)に移動できるよう構成される。更に又、のステージ4cは、回転ペアリング7を介し駆動モータ8によってYステージ4bに対して図1に示すの方向に回転するよう構成される。

【0022】ここで、 θ ステージ4c上には、下基板33を載置保持するテーブル9が支持柱10を介して固定されている。また、Yステージ4bには、回転ベアリング13と真空シール14を介して支持柱10の下部側を被包するアーム11が配設されており、これにより支持柱10の回転に伴ってアーム11がつられて回転しないようになっている。更に又、そのアーム11と基板貼り合わせ部S2の後述する真空貼り合わせ室15との間には、アーム11上に一端を固定し且つ真空貼り合わせ室15の下部に他端を固定すると共に支持柱10に覆設する蛇服状の弾性体から成る真空ベローズ12が配設されており、これにより貼り合わせ時における真空貼り合わせ室15内の真空状態を保持している。

【0023】尚、本実施形態にあっては支持柱10をテーブル9の略中央に一本配設しているが、必ずしもこれに限定するものではなく、例えば θ ステージ4cによるテーブル9の所定量(後述する位置合わせマークの位置ずれ量)を補正するだけの回転が可能であればその支持柱10を複数本設けてもよい。

【0024】 [基板貼り合わせ部] 基板貼り合わせ部S 2は、図1に示すように、真空下にて二枚の基板33.34の貼り合わせを行う真空貼り合わせ室(真空チャンバ)15と、この真空貼り合わせ室15内に配設されたテーブル9と、同じく真空貼り合わせ室15内でテーブル9の上方に対向して配設された加圧板16とを有する。この場合、テーブル9には後述する接着剤37や液晶39が設けられた下基板33が載置保持され、加圧板16にはその下基板33に貼り合わせる上基板34が保持される。

【0026】更に、真空貼り合わせ室15の下部には真 空貼り合わせ室15内を真空排気する為の第一及び第二 の排気管20a, 20bが配設されており、これら各排 気管20a、20bは、図示しない切換バルブを介して 英空ポンプに接続される。ここで、第一排気管20a は、第二排気管20bに比べて細いものが用いられ、例 えば各々断面略円形の排気管の場合、第一排気管20 a の径を1とすると、太い方の第二排気管20bは約10 ~100倍程度の径のものが用いられる。この場合、第 一排気管20aの径は、この第一排気管20aから後述 するが如く真空貼り合わせ室15内を真空排気する際 に、ガスの流れによって基板33、34の暴れ、下基板 33上の液晶の飛散や減圧による水分の凍結が発生しな い速度となるように設定する。例えばその径の設定の際 には、種々の径の配管にて予め実験し、その実験結果に 基づいて定めた径の第一排気管20aを配設する。

【0027】また、真空貼り合わせ室15内のテーブル9側には、下基板33を図示しない移載機から受け取る。若しくはセルを取り出す為に使用される複数の昇降ピン35が立設される。この昇降ピン35は、その一端(図1中の下端)にシリンダ36が配設されており、このシリンダ36によってテーブル9に形成した貫通孔の中を上下方向に移動できるよう構成されている。

【0028】更に又、東空貼り合わせ室15の上部にはその東空貼り合わせ室15内の東空状態を大気圧に戻す為の配管21と、東空貼り合わせ室15内にガス(空気)を導入する若しくは遮断する為に配管21の途中に備えた弁22とが配設される。ここで、配管21には図示しない圧力源(例えばボンプ)が接続されており、これにより東空貼り合わせ室15内へのガスの導入速度を制御することができる。尚、その圧力源は、必ずしも配設されてなくてもよい。

【0029】また、裏空貼り合わせ室15の側面(前述したゲートバルブ17が備えられた側とは反対側)にはその裏空貼り合わせ室15に形成された略円形の第二開口部15bを閉塞する板状体から成る大気開放弁23を、この大気開放弁23を第二開口部15bから離間させるシリンダ24とが配設される。このように、大気開放弁23を設け、この大気開放弁23を第二開口部15bから離間させることによって、真空貼り合わせ室15内を急速に大気圧に戻すことができる。ここで、前述した配管21に断面略円形のものを用いた場合は、その配管21の径を1とすると、第二開口部15bの口径は5以上にすることが望ましい。

【0030】更に、真空貼り合わせ室15の上部には加圧板16に形成された図示しないマーク認識用孔を通して上下の各基板33、34の位置合わせマークを観測する為の窓25が複数設けられる。ここで、その位置合わせマークの観測には図1に示す認識用カメラ26が用いられ、この認識用カメラ26によって各基板33、34の位置合わせマークのずれを測定する。

【0031】続いて、テーブル9には、静電気又は真空 吸着によって下基板33を吸着する為の図示しない静電 吸着用電極と複数の真空吸着孔9aとが設けられてい ス

【0032】その静電吸着用電極は、本実施形態にあっては略矩形の平板電極であり、テーブル9の上面の両端側に形成された二つの略矩形の凹部に各々嵌着される。また、その静電吸着用電極は、その表面(テーブル9の上面側)が誘電体で覆われており、この誘電体の主面がテーブル9の上面と面一になるよう設けられる。このようにテーブル9に配設された静電吸着用電極は、夫々正負の直流電源に適宜なスイッチを介して接続されている。これが為、各静電吸着用電極に正或いは負の電圧が印加されると、上記誘電体の主面に負或いは正の電荷が誘起される。そして、その電荷によって下基板34に形成されている透明電極膜との間に発生するクーロンカで下基板34がテーブル9に静電吸着される。ここで、各静電吸着用電極に印加する電圧は、同極でもよいし、夫々異なる双極でもよい。

【0033】尚、基板貼り合わせ室15内が大気の場合は、前述した真空吸着孔9aによる吸引吸着を行った方がよい。その理由は、静電吸着を行う場合、下基板34とテーブル9の間に空気層があると、静電気による放電現象が発生して下基板34やテーブル9を損傷してしまう。これが為、例えば下基板34をテーブル9に最初に密着保持するときは周囲が大気下にあるので、先ず吸引吸着を行い、減圧室内を減圧していって放電現象が発生しない程度まで減圧されてから静電吸着を行うことが望ましい。

【0034】次に、各真空吸着孔9aは、配管18を介して基板貼り合わせ室15の外部に配設した図示しない吸着バルブに接続され、この吸着バルブを経由して図示しない真空ボンプに接続されている。この場合、その配管18の途中には真空吸着解除用のバルブを介して大気開放する為のバイバス配管が設けられており、その真空吸着解除用バルブを大気開放することによって吸着状態を強制的に解除している。このように構成されたテーブル9は、前述したが如く支持柱10を介してのステージ4c上に固定される。

【0035】また、加圧板16には、テーブル9と同様に上基板34を吸着する為の静電吸着用電極と複数の真空吸着孔16aとが設けられている。ここで、後述するが如く加圧板16にて上基板34を吸引吸着している状

【0036】具体的には、図示しないが、基板貼り合わせ室15の上部に形成された貫通孔にシャフトが挿通されており、このシャフトがその軸中心で回転し且つ上下移動できるように構成されている。この場合、基板貼り合わせ室15内が真空漏れを起こさないようにシャフトに英空シールが覆設されている。上記回転はシャフトの端部に接続された図示しない回転アクチェータによって、上下移動は同様にシャフトの端部に接続された図示しない昇降アクチェータによって行われる。このようにシャフトを回転又は上下移動させることによって、各基板33、34の貼り合わせを行ない、下基板33上に滴下された液晶剤を各基板33、34の主面の広がり方向に拡張させる際に邪魔にならぬように基板保持爪を退避させることができる。

【0037】上記各真空吸着孔16aは、配管19を介して基板貼り合わせ室15の外部に配設した図示しない吸着バルブに接続され、この吸着バルブを経由して図示しない真空ボンプに接続されている。この場合、その配管18の途中にはテーブル9と同様に真空吸着解除用のバルブを介して大気開放する為のバイバス配管が設けられており、その真空吸着解除用バルブを大気開放することによって吸着状態を強制的に解除している。このように構成された加圧板16は、複数の支持柱27を介して 乙軸移動ステージ部S3の後述する移動ベース29に吊り下げ固定されている。

【0038】ここで、真空貼り合わせ室15と移動ベース29との間には、真空貼り合わせ室15上に一端を固定し且つ移動ベース29の下部に他端を固定すると共に支持往27に預設する蛇阪状の弾性体から成る真空ベローズ28が配設されており、これにより貼り合わせ時における真空貼り合わせ室15内の真空状態を保持している。

【0039】 [乙軸移動ステージ部] 2軸移動ステージ部S3は、加圧板16を吊り下げ保持する移動ベース29と、その両端に配設されたリニアガイド30と、このリニアガイド30と係合し且つフレーム3に設けられた上下方向(図1に示す2軸方向)のレール3aと、その2軸方向の出力軸を備えた電動モータ32と、一端が移動ベース29間に係合し且つ他端が電動モータ32の出力軸側に係合するボールネジ31とを有する。このように2軸移動ステージ部S3を構成することによって、駆動させた電動モータ32で移動ベース29をレールに沿

って上下方向に移動させ、加圧板16を上下移動させることができる。

【0040】[基板貼り合わせ装置の動作]次に、本実施形態の基板貼り合わせ装置の動作を説明する。ここでは貼り合わせ対象物たる基板として液晶パネル用の基板を用いた場合について例示する。

【0041】子め、貼り合わせる二枚の基板の何れか一方には、その各基板を貼り合わせた際に液晶を決められた枠内に閉じ込め封入する為、枠状に接着剤を一筆書きで塗布しておき、その枠内に液晶を所定最満下しておく。この液晶が満下された基板を下基板33とする。

【0042】先ず、真空貼り合わせ室15の外部に配設された図示しない移載機のハンドを用いて、膜面を下方に向けた上基板34の周縁部を下側から吸引吸着する。そして、真空貼り合わせ室15の第一開口部15aに備えたゲートバルブ17を開け、その第一開口部15aから移載機のハンドを真空貼り合わせ室15内に挿入し、電動モータ32を駆動して下降させた加圧板16を上基板34に押し付ける。しかる後、ハンドの吸引吸着を解除し、真空ポンプを作動させて吸引吸着孔16aで上基板34を加圧板16に真空吸着する。この上基板34の吸着が終了すると、ハンドを真空貼り合わせ室15外に退避させる。

【0043】続いて、各昇降ピン35の先端がテーブル9の上面から突出するようにシリンダ36を作動させ各昇降ピン35を上昇させておく。そして、液晶を滴下した面を上にした下基板33の周縁部を移載機のハンドで下側から吸引吸着し、そのハンドを真空貼り合わせ室15内に挿入して下基板33を各昇降ピン35上に移載する。この下基板33の移載が終了すると、ハンドを真空貼り合わせ室15外に退避させてゲートバルブ17を閉じる。しかる後、各昇降ピン35を下降させて下基板33をテーブル9上に載置し、真空ポンプを作動させて吸引吸着孔9aで下基板33をテーブル9に真空吸着する

【0045】続いて、第一排気管20aによる排気によ

って真空貼り合わせ室15内が所定の圧になったとき に、具体的には図示しない圧力計にて測定した真空貼り 合わせ室15内の気圧が排気速度を上げても基板暴れ、 液晶飛散や水分凍結が発生しない圧力になったとき(例 えば、真空吸着力で吸着している上基板34が加圧板1 6から離れない程度の圧まで減圧したとき)に、第一排 気管20aのバルブを閉じる。

【0046】そして、第二排気管20bのバルブを開放し、各基板33、34を貼り合わせる為の圧力(本実施形態にあっては約5×10⁻³Torr)まで真空貼り合わせ室15内を急速に減圧する。ここで、その圧力下では上基板33の真空吸着力よりも真空貼り合わせ室15内の気圧の方が低くなっているので、その上基板33が加圧板16から離れてしまう。しかしながら、加圧板16の下面側には前述した基板保持爪が具備されており、前述した回転アクチェータや昇降アクチェータによって基板保持爪を動かして上基板33が保持されているので、その上基板33は加圧板16から離間しない。

【0047】上述したが如く真空貼り合わせ室15内の減圧が終了すると、真空中でも各基板33,34をデーブル9と加圧板16に各々吸音できるように、そのデーブル9及び加圧板16の静電吸音電極に電圧を印加して各基板33,34を静電吸音する。しかる後、電動モータ32を駆動して移動ベース29を下降させ、上基板34を下基板33に接近させる。そして、認識用カメラ26を用いて各基板33,34に設けた位置合わせマークを観測して基板33,34に設けた位置合わせマークを観測して基板33,34間の位置ずれを測定し、この測定値に基づきXステージ4a,Yステージ4b並びに母ステージ4cの動作制御を行ってテーブル9を水平移動させ、下基板33と上基板34との高精度な位置合わせを行う。

【0048】その位置合わせが終了すると、移動ベース 29を更に下降させ、上基板34が接着剤を押し潰して 一次加圧を行う。この一次加圧の後、加圧板16の静電 吸着電極の印加電圧を切断し、電動モータ32を駆動し て加圧板16を上昇させる。

【0049】ここで、この一次加圧後の各基板33,3 4の状態を図2に示す。この場合の基板33,34間の 間隔は約15μm程度であり、まだ所望の間隔になって いない。これが為、接着剤37の潰れ量が少なく、その 接着剤37における各基板33,34との接触面積が小 さい(接触部長さ38が短い)のて接着状態が不完全で ある。更には、接着剤37の枠内の液晶39が広がら ず、その液晶39間に大きな真空空間部40ができてい る。

【0050】このような各基板33,34の状態は、前述した従来例に示す加圧板16の加圧力が不足する場合に相当する。かかる場合に所望の加圧力を印加する為には、装置自体を大きくして大きな加圧力を印加できるようにしてもよい。しかしながら、装置が大型化してしま

うので、装置全体を再構築しなければならず費用がかかってしまう。

【0051】ここで、真空貼り合わせ室15内の圧力を真空状態から大気圧へと変化させると、基板33,34間の空間部分(前述した真空空間部40)は真空状態である為、各基板33,34には略均一にその外部から大きな圧力が加わる。例えば各基板33,34の大きさが1200mm×1000mmの場合は、その基板33,34間の空間部分が真空状態のときに大気圧を加えると121.6kNの力を掛けることができる。これが為、本実施形態にあっては以下の如く二次加圧を行い、既存の装置の大きさのままで適正な基板間隔である5μm以下好ましくは4μm以下の間隔にする。

【0052】前述したが如く一次加圧終了後に真空貼り 合わせ室15内を真空状態から大気圧へと圧力を変化さ せると、各基板33,34には略均一に圧力を加えるこ とができる。しかしながら、急激に大気圧に戻した場合 は、前述したが如く接着剤37がまだ十分に潰れていな い為、ガスがその接着剤37を破って真空空間部40に 入り込み、不良品の液晶基板ができてしまう。これが 為、本実施形態にあっては、一次加圧終了後に細い配管 21の弁22を開放し、その配管21に接続した圧力源 から加圧されたガスを真空貼り合わせ室15内に導入す ることで、徐々に大気圧に戻す。このように真空貼り合 わせ室15内を徐々に大気圧に戻していくと、各基板3 3,34には徐々に圧力が加わり、接着剤37が徐々に 潰れていく。そしてこれにより、接着剤37と各基板3 3.34との接触面積も徐々に拡大する。このようにし て真空空間部40の内圧と真空貼り合わせ室15内の圧 力との差を徐々に大きくするので、導入されたガスが接 着剤37を破って真空空間部40内に入り込むことはな

【0053】この状態の各基板33.34を図3に示 す。この図3に示す基板33、34間の間隔は約10μ m程度になっている。ここで、接着剤37は、前述した が如く真空貼り合わせ室15内にガスを導入すると、図 2から図3に近い形状に潰れることで流動が起こり、チ クソトロピー性によって粘度が低下する。本実施形態に あってはこの接着剤37の粘度が低下した状態で、急速 に真空貼り合わせ室15内を大気圧に戻す為の大気開放 弁23を開放して更に各基板33,34に加圧力を加え る。具体的には、真空貼り合わせ室15内に設けた圧力 計が所定圧を超えたことを検出したときに弁22を閉 じ、且つシリンダ24を作動させて大気開放弁23を開 放することによって、各基板33,34に加圧力が加わ り貼り合わせが終了する。例えばその所定圧としては、 導入されたガスが接着剤37を破って真空空間部40内 に入り込むことがなくなったときの圧力を予め実験等で 検出しておき、その圧力を設定しておけばよい。

【0054】このように急速に真空貼り合わせ室15内

を大気圧に戻すことによって、接着剤37の接触面積が各基板33,34に対して広がりシール性が向上するので、基板33,34間にガスが接着剤37を破って入り込むことがなくなる。また、接着剤37はその粘度が低下している為に速やかに潰れ、且つ液晶39も加圧されて潰れて広がるので、各基板33,34の貼り合わせ時間が短くなる。

【0055】以上示したが如く貼り合わせが終了し、更には真空貼り合わせ室15内の圧力が大気圧になると、ゲートバルブ17を開ける。そして、テーブル9の静電吸着電極の印加電圧を遮断し、且つ真空吸着孔9aにおける吸引を解除した後、各昇降ピン35を上昇させてセルをテーブル9上から押し上げる。しかる後、移載機のハンドを第一開口部15aからセルの下部(セルとテーブル9の間)に挿入し、そのハンド上にセルを移載して真空貼り合わせ室15外に搬出する。

【0056】ここで、前述した大気開放弁23を動かすシリンダ24は、真空貼り合わせ室15内の圧力が大気圧になったときにも大気開放弁23を開放するように設定しておく。これにより、前述した所定圧時に弁22を閉じ忘れても、真空貼り合わせ室15内の圧力が大気圧になると自動的に大気開放弁23が開放されるので、真空貼り合わせ室15内の圧力が大気圧以上に上昇しないように制御できる。そしてこれが為、セルの特度低下を招かず且つ作業の安全性を確保することができる。

【0057】尚、本実施形態にあっては太さの異なる第一及び第二の排気管20a、20bを切換バルブによって切り換えて排気経路を変更し、これにより排気速度を制御しているが、必ずしもその方法に限定するものではなく、例えば本実施形態の如く二つの排気管20a、20bを設けずに一つの排気管のみで構成してこの排気管に真空ボンプを接続し、この真空ボンプを制御して排気速度を制御してもよい。この場合、排気管は、太い方の管径(即ち本実施形態の第二排気管20bの管径)にすることが望ましい。

【0058】続いて、前述した二次加圧の変形例を説明する。この場合は、前述した二次加圧と異なり、予めシリンダ24に大気開放弁23を開く方向の力を掛けておく。その力とは、真空貼り合わせ室15内が真空状態になっているときに大気開放弁23が第二開口部15bを閉塞し続ける(真空貼り合わせ室15内の真空状態を保ち続ける)程度の小さな力である。具体的には、シリンダ24に予め掛けた大気開放弁23を開く方向の力を、真空状態の真空貼り合わせ室15内から大気開放弁23に掛かる引張力よりも小さくする。

【0059】以上の如き状態で弁22を開放し、配管2 1に接続された圧力源を駆動して真空貼り合わせ室15 内にガスを徐々に導入する。ガスが導入され続けて真空 貼り合わせ室15内の真空度が小さくなり、大気開放弁 23を開放しようする前述したシリンダ24に予め掛け た力に比べて引張力の方が小さくなると、大気開放弁23が自動的に開放されて真空貼り合わせ室15内の圧力が急速に大気圧に戻る。このように、予め大気開放弁23に開放方向の力を加えておくことによって、真空貼り合わせ室15内が大気圧を超える圧力になることはなく、これによりセルの精度低下を招かずに作業の安全性を確保できる。即ち、その大気開放弁23を安全弁として作用させることもできる。尚、本実施形態にあっても、必ずしも圧力源を設けずともよい。

【0060】続いて、二次加圧の他の変形例を説明する。本変形例は、上記変形例と異なり、予めシリンダ24に大気開放弁23を閉じる方向の力を掛けておく。その力とは、真空貼り合わせ室15内の圧力が大気圧よりも大きくなったときに、その圧力が掛かるまで大気開放弁23が閉じた状態を保つ力である。この場合のシリンダ24に掛ける力は、各基板33、34の貼り合わせに要する加圧力が大きい程、大きな力が掛けられる。

【0061】以上の如く予めシリンダ24に力を掛けた 状態で弁22を開放し、配管21に接続された圧力源を 駆動して真空貼り合わせ室15内に徐々にガスを導入す る。このガスは、真空貼り合わせ室15内の圧力が大気 圧を超えるまで,具体的にはシリンダ24に予め設定し た力を超えるまで導入され、その力を超えると大気開放 弁23が開放されて真空貼り合わせ室15内が大気圧に 戻される。このように、予めシリンダ24に大気開放弁 23を閉じる方向の力を掛けておくことによって、各基 板33,34が大きい為その貼り合わせに大きな加圧力 を必要とする場合でも、シリンダ24に設定する力を調 整することで、各基板33,34の貼り合わせに必要な 力を均等に加えることができる。

【0062】上記各変形例にあっては、以上示したが如く加圧力を掛けて貼り合わせが終了し、更には真空貼り合わせ室15内の圧力が大気圧になると、弁22を閉じ、ゲートバルブ17を開ける。そして、テーブル9の静電吸管電極の印加電圧を遮断し、真空吸着孔9aにおける吸引を解除した後、各昇降ビン35を上昇させてセルをテーブル9上から押し上げる。しかる後、移載機のハンドを第一開口部15aからセルの下部(セルとテーブル9の間)に挿入し、そのハンド上にセルを移載して真空貼り合わせ室15外に搬出する。

【0063】[第二実施形態]次に、本発明に係る基板 貼り合わせ装置の第二実施形態について図4に基づいて 説明する。

【0064】この基板貼り合わせ装置は、前述した第一 実施形態の装置とは以下の点で異なり、他はその第一実 施形態と同様に構成される。具体的には、第一実施形態 ではゲートバルブ17と大気開放弁23とを別個独立し て設けたが、本実施形態にあってはその大気開放弁23 をゲートバルブ17と兼用して設けている。以下にその 構成について 詳述する.

【0065】第一実施形態のゲートバルブ17と大気開放弁23とを兼用した本実施形態の構成は、真空貼り合わせ室15の第一開口部15aを閉塞する例えば上下方向に移動自在なゲートバルブ41と、このゲートバルブ41の閉窓面と反対側の面から立設した複数のシャフト42と、これら各シャフト42を立設した面に配設され且つゲートバルブ41を第一開口部15aから離間方向(図4に示すX方向)に移動自在なシリンダ44と、各シャフト42年に覆設されたそのシャフト42を軸方向に摺動するリニアガイド43を備えた例えば断面略し字状のアーム45と、このアーム45に固定されたゲートバルブ41の上下方向の移動動作を行うシリンダ46とを有する。ここで、本実施形態の真空貼り合わせ室15には第一実施形態の真空貼り合わせ室15に元した第二開口部15bは形成されない。

【0066】このように構成された本実施形態の装置の各基板33,34の貼り合わせ動作は、前述した第一実施形態におけるゲートバルブ17と大気開放弁23に係る動作が異なるのみで、他の動作はその第一実施形態と同様である。ここで、本実施形態における動作の相異点のみを以下に説明する。

【0067】先ず、各基板33.34を真空貼り合わせ室15内に搬入する場合やセルを真空貼り合わせ室15内から搬出する場合は、シリンダ46を作動させてゲートバルブ41をシリンダ44やアーム45と共に上下移動させる。続いて、二次加圧時に真空貼り合わせ室15内の圧力を急速に大気圧に戻す場合は、シリンダ44を作動させてゲートバルブ41を真空貼り合わせ室15から離間させ、第一開口部15aを開放することによって真空貼り合わせ室15内に大気を導入して行われる。ここで、前述した第一実施形態の各変形例の如くシリンダ44に予め力を掛けておき、その変形例と同様にゲートバルブ41を動作させてもよい。

【0068】このように、前述した第一実施形態の大気、 開放弁23の機能をゲートバルブ41に持たせることに よって、部品点数を削減することができ、更には装置の 小型化をも図ることができる。また、装置の組み立ても 容易に行うことができる。

[0069]

【発明の効果】本発明に係る基板貼り合わせ方法及びそ の装置は、真空チャンバ内に二枚の基板を搬入した後、 その真空チャンバ内が所定の圧になるまで徐々に排気す る。そして、所定圧になった際に急速に排気して真空チ ャンバ内を真空状態にすることによって、各基板の暴れ や水分の凍結の発生を防止することができ、これにより 確実且つ短時間で貼り合せを完了させることができる。 【0070】また、各基板を機械的に加圧貼り合わせ し、その後、真空状態の真空チャンバ内が所定の圧にな るまで徐々にガスを導入する。そして、所定圧になった 際に急速にガスを導入して真空チャンパ内を大気圧にす ることによって、貼り合わせた各基板の間隔を正確に位 置合わせすることができ、これにより確実且つ短時間で 貼り合せを完了させることができる、という従来にない **優れた基板貼り合わせ方法及びその装置を得ることが可**・ 能となる。

【図面の簡単な説明】

【図1】本発明に係る基板貼り合わせ装置の第一実施形 照の構成を示す部分断面図である。

【図2】本実施形態における一次加圧後の各基板を示す 説明図である。

【図3】本実施形態における二次加圧時の大気解放前の 各基板を示す説明図である。

【図4】本発明に係る基板貼り合わせ装置の第二実施形態の構成を示す部分断面図である。

【符号の説明】

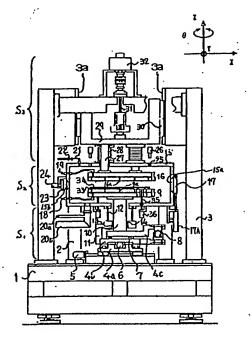
- 9 テーブル
- 15 真空貼り合わせ室(真空チャンバ)
- 16 加圧板
- 20a 第一排気管 (排気速度可変手段の第二排気機 構)
- 20b 第二排気管(排気速度可変手段の第一排気機 構)
- 21 配管(導入速度可変手段の第一ガス導入機構)
- 22 弁(導入速度可変手段の第一ガス導入機構)
- 23 大気開放弁 (導入速度可変手段の第二ガス導入機 構)
- .33,34 基板
- 37 接着剤

【図1】

[図1]

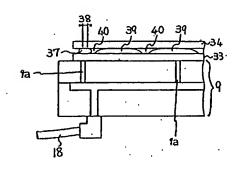
【図2】

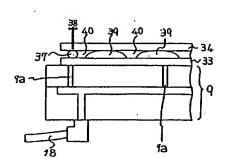
[図2]



[図3]

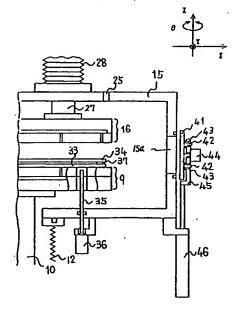
[図3]





【図4】

[図4]



フロントページの続き

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